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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/30/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [NATO](#) [SP](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: NEW SPANISH DEFENSE POLICY DIRECTOR ON
AFGHANISTAN, NCIS/OSI, KOSOVO

REF: A. STATE 7434
[B](#). MADRID 136
[C](#). STATE 5652

Classified By: DCM Hugo Llorens for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d).

[1](#). (C/NF) DCM, accompanied by PolCouns, met with new MOD
Secretary General for Policy Luis Cuesta on January 30 to

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reinforce ref A points on the importance of additional
commitments to the NATO ISAF mission in Afghanistan. DCM
emphasized that while ISAF is making progress in Afghanistan,
enormous problems of poverty and governance remain, so Allies
need to demonstrate a renewed commitment now, at the
Ministerials, to seize the moment and to build on the Riga
Summit. He acknowledged the good work that the Spanish
Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) is doing in Baghdadis
province.

[2](#). (C/NF) Cuesta said that Afghanistan is a Spanish national
security priority not only because 90 percent of the opium
that enters Europe comes from Afghanistan but also because
many of the March 11 train bombers had trained in terrorist
camps there. He said that while Spain has no plans to send
additional troops to the south and east, it is considering
other possibilities and that Defense Minister Alonso is
likely to make a announcement on this issue at the NATO
Defense Ministerial in Seville (ref B). Press reports say
that Spain could send 150 troops to the ISAF HQ in Kabul and
150 to the west where it maintains a PRT and Forward Support
Base (FSB). (NOTE: During on unrelated press conference
later in the day on January 30, President Zapatero made a
blanket statement that Spain would not increase the number of
its troops in Afghanistan. END NOTE.) Cuesta also described
Alonso's announcement the day before (which Alonso made while
visiting the Spanish PRT and FSB) that Spain would train and
equip two Afghan National Army battalions: one combat
battalion and one support battalion. He noted that the cost
of training and equipping these Afghan troops would be around
20 percent of the cost of sending equivalent Spanish troops.

[3](#). (C/NF) Cuesta said that Spain expects Kosovo to be a major
topic at the Ministerial, and that Spain supports taking the
time necessary to maximize agreement between the opposing
parties, even if that means moving more slowly than the
Ahtisaari plan. DCM and PolCouns pushed back (ref C),
reminding Cuesta that Kosovo has been a difficult issue for a
long time, and that it is time to move to a final status
agreement, as Ahtisaari proposes. PolCouns noted that it is
important for the US and EU to stand firmly together on this

issue and to resist Russian interference.

¶4. (C/NF) On the issue of NCIS/OSI operations in Spain, Cuesta said that the January 25 videoconference was positive, and that the US and Spain are moving towards signing an agreement. He said that once MOD receives the final English version from OSD, MOD will need to make an official translation, which would then go to MOD and MFA lawyers for final review. He did not give any sense of how long this might take. He also mentioned that the Director General for Defense Policy would be the signing authority for MOD.

¶5. (C/NF) BIO NOTE and COMMENT: Cuesta is a relatively young career diplomat (born 1968) who has served in Spanish embassies in Italy and Colombia as well as the UN Development Program and the Spanish international cooperation agency AECI. He was the Defense Minister's international affairs adviser from August 2005 to January 2006. While Cuesta's personal style is far more pleasant and collaborative than the crusty Admiral Francisco Torrente that he replaced, his underlying message is likely to be largely the same. Cuesta, without Torrente's 30 years of military command under his belt, may not share Torrente's tendency for lecturing, but he works for the same bureaucracy and will continue to represent the view that while the US-Spain defense relationship is important to both countries, the US gets more out of it than Spain does. In addition, while Torrente's default world view was that of a military man who was formed in a time when the US was one of Spain's only friends, Cuesta is likely to focus more on the political and the multilateral.
Aguirre